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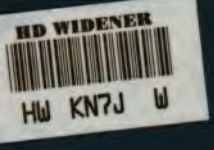
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LONGFELLOW'S SONNETS

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THE SONNETS OF HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

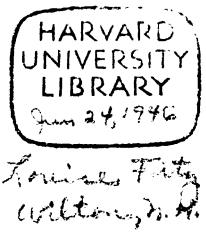
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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

IT is an interesting and remarkable fact that Longfellow's Sonnets were almost entirely the product of his later life, of the years when his character was at its ripest and mellowest, and when he had attained to the most complete mastery of the technique of the poetic art. With the possible exception of a translation or two, his first sonnet was "Mezzo Cammin," written in 1842, when he was thirty-five years old. Three years later he wrote the first Dante sonnet and "The Evening Star," and four years thereafter the sonnet "On Mrs. Kemble's Readings from Shakespeare." Then — if the accepted chronology of his work be veracious — there was an interval of fifteen years without a sonnet, until 1864, when the first of the "Divina Commedia" sonnets appeared. The last of this series of six was printed in 1867, and "Giotto's

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Tower" and "To-morrow" had been written in 1866. For six years again there were no more sonnets, but in the three years beginning with 1873 Longfellow seems to have taken up the form deliberately and seriously. In these three years he composed thirty-one sonnets,— more than half of this collection, exclusive of translations. Thence onward the Sonnet was one of his favorite poetic vehicles. The sonnets of his last years include such wholly fine and characteristic pieces as "The Cross of Snow," written in 1879, "My Books" and "President Garfield," written in 1881, and "Possibilities," written in 1882, only a few weeks before his death.

Inasmuch as more than three fourths of Longfellow's original sonnets were composed within the last decade of his life, it is evident that any attempt towards a chronological arrangement of them is beside the mark. It chances, however, that as one ponders the whole body of his work in this kind, it falls into

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a strikingly suggestive tripartite division; and even within these divisions the pieces crystallize into something of a significant autobiographic arrangement. There are the Personal Sonnets, the Sonnets dealing with Nature, and, finally, those expressing the aims and admirations of the Life of Letters. And how characteristic is the range of mood and subject in the sonnets of each section. In such Personal Sonnets as "Mezzo Cammin," "The Two Rivers," "Sleep," "Holidays," and "Memories," we have shadowed forth that inner current of hopes and frustrations and attainments which is of the very essence of personality; "The Evening Star" and "The Cross of Snow" reveal the depth of the poet's love; in "To-morrow" and "A Shadow" we learn his tender solicitude for his children, and in "Three Friends of Mine" the fine, firm ardor of his friendships. So in his Sonnets of Nature, full of the sentiment of the sea and the night, of New England woodland, and recollected

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travel, we behold the natural background of the poet's mind; and in the pieces dealing with the Life of Letters we discover how real and living a thing to him was the age-long tradition, the apostolic succession, of the poets, and how fine was the idealism that filled those long tranquil years in the study at Craigie House. Even the Experiments and Translations that have been grouped in the appendix to this volume have their characteristic significance, showing as they do the remarkable range of the poet's reading, the soundness of his critical preferences, and the masterly craftsmanship of his hand.

To the student of sonnet technique — and what reader of sonnets is incurious of their composition? — Longfellow's Sonnets present a few points of the first interest. Our first glance at any one of them reveals what is perhaps their most striking peculiarity. Almost alone among English sonneteers Longfellow has invariably followed the strict Italian system of indentation,

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in which the first lines of the two quatrains of the octette and of the two tercets of the sestette are set out to the left without regard to the rhyming system, which, with most English sonnets, has determined the typographical arrangement. Many lovers of the sonnet have thought this far superior to the common English arrangement, both for its accentuation of the formal structure of the sonnet, and for its more compact and sculpturesque look upon the page. It will be found that in Longfellow's best pieces the structure of the mood and thought corresponds with singular fidelity and effectiveness to the physical ordonnance of the type.

Despite this severity of structural form Longfellow allows himself in one or two respects a considerable latitude. Save in two comparatively early pieces, "The Evening Star" and "On Mrs. Kemble's Readings from Shakespeare," he never concludes a sonnet with a couplet, which is apt to break the harmonious chime of linked terminations with too sharp a peal at the end,

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but three times at least, in "Mezzo Cammin," "Parker Cleaveland," and "Autumn," he ends with an Alexandrine. He makes, too, more liberal use of feminine rhymes than any other sonnet writer of equal eminence in our language. This last point is specially noteworthy. As the result, perhaps, of his Romance lore and large experience in translating from the Southern tongues Longfellow was a past master in the use of double rhymes. Three times, —in the sonnet "On Mrs. Kemble's Readings from Shakespeare," and in the third and fourth numbers of the series entitled "The Two Rivers," — he introduces them in the octette. Here their felicity is, to say the least, debatable, but in the many instances where they occur in the sestette they blend with that smooth harmony of vowels habitual with Longfellow, with the recollected cadences that afford the ripe sonnet reader one of his chief pleasures, and lend to the sonnet's close a rich romantic music that greatly charms the ear. The curious

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inquirer will notice that, barring translations, the feminine rhymes in the sestette are found only in the Sonnets of Nature, where they make forty per cent of the whole number. The imaginative reader may explain this, if he so choose, by the greater lyricism of the poet's mood when stirred by natural beauty.

When we leave these technical details behind us and approach Longfellow's Sonnets upon the higher poetic ground, when we place them in comparison with the other sonnet books of our literature, and read them for themselves, we shall discover that Longfellow's work in this kind is upon a more even and a higher level than any other similar body of sonnets that can readily be found. There is no single sonnet so fine and memorable as many of Shakespeare's, as a few of Milton's and Wordsworth's, and as sundry fortunate sonnets by other hands that are among the choicest treasures of English poetry. The best of Longfellow's never have quite the intensity, the *unforgetableness*,

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of these greatest sonnets. Yet their average is incomparably high. They exhibit very notably the dignity and repose of mood which are essential to sustained success in sonnet-writing. In grave, nobly impassioned language, adorned with stately or vivid imagery, often pointed with some quaint and telling conceit, they express with completeness and beauty the pensively shadowed, tender, and generous spirit of one of the most sincere of poets.

F. G.

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I

PERSONAL SONNETS

'WITH THIS KEY SHAKESPEARE UNLOCKED HIS HEART'

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MEZZO CAMMIN

HALF of my life is gone, and I have let
The years slip from me and have not fulfilled
The aspiration of my youth, to build
Some tower of song with lofty parapet.
Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret
Of restless passions that would not be stilled,
But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,
Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;
Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past
Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights, —
A city in the twilight dim and vast,
With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights, —
And hear above me on the autumnal blast
The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights.

AUGUST 25, 1842.

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THE TWO RIVERS

I

Slowly the hour-hand of the clock moves round;
So slowly that no human eye hath power
To see it move! Slowly in shine or shower
The painted ship above it, homeward bound,
Sails, but seems motionless, as if aground;
Yet both arrive at last; and in his tower
The slumberous watchman wakes and strikes the hour,
A mellow, measured, melancholy sound.
Midnight! the outpost of advancing day!
The frontier town and citadel of night!
The watershed of Time, from which the streams
Of Yesterday and To-morrow take their way,
One to the land of promise and of light,
One to the land of darkness and of dreams!

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II

O River of Yesterday, with current swift
  Through chasms descending, and soon lost to sight,
  I do not care to follow in their flight
  The faded leaves, that on thy bosom drift!
O River of To-morrow, I uplift
  Mine eyes, and thee I follow, as the night
  Wanes into morning, and the dawning light
  Broadens, and all the shadows fade and shift!
I follow, follow, where thy waters run
  Through unfrequented, unfamiliar fields,
  Fragrant with flowers and musical with song;
Still follow, follow; sure to meet the sun,
  And confident, that what the future yields
  Will be the right, unless myself be wrong.

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III

Yet not in vain, O River of Yesterday,
Through chasms of darkness to the deep descending,
I heard thee sobbing in the rain, and blending
Thy voice with other voices far away.
I called to thee, and yet thou wouldst not stay,
But turbulent, and with thyself contending,
And torrent-like thy force on pebbles spending,
Thou wouldst not listen to a poet's lay.
Thoughts, like a loud and sudden rush of wings,
Regrets and recollections of things past,
With hints and prophecies of things to be,
And inspirations, which, could they be things,
And stay with us, and we could hold them fast,
Were our good angels, — these I owe to thee.

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IV

And thou, O River of To-morrow, flowing
Between thy narrow adamantine walls,
But beautiful, and white with waterfalls,
And wreaths of mist, like hands the pathway showing;
I hear the trumpets of the morning blowing,
I hear thy mighty voice, that calls and calls,
And see, as Ossian saw in Morven's halls,
Mysterious phantoms, coming, beckoning, going!
It is the mystery of the unknown
That fascinates us; we are children still,
Wayward and wistful; with one hand we cling
To the familiar things we call our own,
And with the other, resolute of will,
Grope in the dark for what the day will bring.

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THE EVENING STAR

Lo! in the painted oriel of the West,
Whose panes the sunken sun incarnadines,
Like a fair lady at her casement, shines
The evening star, the star of love and rest!
And then anon she doth herself divest
Of all her radiant garments, and reclines
Behind the sombre screen of yonder pines,
With slumber and soft dreams of love oppressed.
O my beloved, my sweet Hesperus!
My morning and my evening star of love!
My best and gentlest lady! even thus,
As that fair planet in the sky above,
Dost thou retire unto thy rest at night,
And from thy darkened window fades the light.

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TO-MORROW

'T is late at night, and in the realm of sleep
My little lambs are folded like the flocks;
From room to room I hear the wakeful clocks
Challenge the passing hour, like guards that keep
Their solitary watch on tower and steep;
Far off I hear the crowing of the cocks,
And through the opening door that time unlocks
Feel the fresh breathing of To-morrow creep.
To-morrow! the mysterious, unknown guest,
Who cries to me: "Remember Barmecide,
And tremble to be happy with the rest."
And I make answer: "I am satisfied;
I dare not ask; I know not what is best;
God hath already said what shall betide."

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A NAMELESS GRAVE

"A SOLDIER of the Union mustered out,"
Is the inscription on an unknown grave
At Newport News, beside the salt-sea wave,
Nameless and dateless; sentinel or scout
Shot down in skirmish, or disastrous rout
Of battle, when the loud artillery drave
Its iron wedges through the ranks of brave
And doomed battalions, storming the redoubt.
Thou unknown hero sleeping by the sea
In thy forgotten grave! with secret shame
I feel my pulses beat, my forehead burn,
When I remember thou hast given for me
All that thou hadst, thy life, thy very name,
And I can give thee nothing in return.

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SLEEP

Lull me to sleep, ye winds, whose fitful sound
  Seems from some faint Æolian harp-string caught;
  Seal up the hundred wakeful eyes of thought
  As Hermes with his lyre in sleep profound
The hundred wakeful eyes of Argus bound;
  For I am weary, and am overwrought
  With too much toil, with too much care distraught,
  And with the iron crown of anguish crowned.
Lay thy soft hand upon my brow and cheek,
  O peaceful Sleep! until from pain released
  I breathe again uninterrupted breath!
Ah, with what subtle meaning did the Greek
  Call thee the lesser mystery at the feast
  Whereof the greater mystery is death!

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A SHADOW

I said unto myself, if I were dead,
What would befall these children? What would be
Their fate, who now are looking up to me
For help and furtherance? Their lives, I said,
Would be a volume wherein I have read
But the first chapters, and no longer see
To read the rest of their dear history,
So full of beauty and so full of dread.
Be comforted; the world is very old,
And generations pass, as they have passed,
A troop of shadows moving with the sun;
Thousands of times has the old tale been told;
The world belongs to those who come the last,
They will find hope and strength as we have done.

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THREE FRIENDS OF MINE

I

When I remember them, those friends of mine,
Who are no longer here, the noble three,
Who half my life were more than friends to me,
And whose discourse was like a generous wine,
I most of all remember the divine
Something, that shone in them, and made us see
The archetypal man, and what might be
The amplitude of Nature's first design.
In vain I stretch my hands to clasp their hands;
I cannot find them. Nothing now is left
But a majestic memory. They meanwhile
Wander together in Elysian lands,
Perchance remembering me, who am bereft
Of their dear presence, and, remembering, smile.

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II

FELTON

In Attica thy birthplace should have been,
Or the Ionian Isles, or where the seas
Encircle in their arms the Cyclades,
So wholly Greek wast thou in thy serene
And childlike joy of life, O Philhellene!
Around thee would have swarmed the Attic bees;
Homer had been thy friend, or Socrates,
And Plato welcomed thee to his demesne.
For thee old legends breathed historic breath;
Thou sawest Poseidon in the purple sea,
And in the sunset Jason's fleece of gold!
Oh, what hadst thou to do with cruel Death,
Who wast so full of life, or Death with thee,
That thou shouldst die before thou hadst grown
old!

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III

AGASSIZ

I stand again on the familiar shore,
And hear the waves of the distracted sea
Piteously calling and lamenting thee,
And waiting restless at thy cottage door.
The rocks, the sea-weed on the ocean floor,
The willows in the meadow, and the free
Wild winds of the Atlantic welcome me;
Then why shouldst thou be dead, and come no more?
Ah, why shouldst thou be dead, when common men
Are busy with their trivial affairs,
Having and holding? Why, when thou hadst read
Nature's mysterious manuscript, and then
Wast ready to reveal the truth it bears,
Why art thou silent? Why shouldst thou be dead?

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IV

SUMNER

River, that stealest with such silent pace
Around the City of the Dead, where lies
A friend who bore thy name, and whom these eyes
Shall see no more in his accustomed place,
Linger and fold him in thy soft embrace,
And say good night, for now the western skies
Are red with sunset, and gray mists arise
Like damps that gather on a dead man's face.
Good night! good night! as we so oft have said
Beneath this roof at midnight, in the days
That are no more, and shall no more return.
Thou hast but taken thy lamp and gone to bed;
I stay a little longer, as one stays
To cover up the embers that still burn.

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V

The doors are all wide open; at the gate
The blossomed lilacs counterfeit a blaze,
And seem to warm the air; a dreamy haze
Hangs o'er the Brighton meadows like a fate,
And on their margin, with sea-tides elate,
The flooded Charles, as in the happier days,
Writes the last letter of his name, and stays
His restless steps, as if compelled to wait.
I also wait; but they will come no more,
Those friends of mine, whose presence satisfied
The thirst and hunger of my heart. Ah me!
They have forgotten the pathway to my door!
Something is gone from nature since they died,
And summer is not summer, nor can be.

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PARKER CLEAVELAND

WRITTEN ON REVISITING BRUNSWICK IN THE SUMMER OF 1875

Among the many lives that I have known,
None I remember more serene and sweet,
More rounded in itself and more complete,
Than his, who lies beneath this funeral stone.
These pines, that murmur in low monotone,
These walks frequented by scholastic feet,
Were all his world; but in this calm retreat
For him the Teacher's chair became a throne.
With fond affection memory loves to dwell
On the old days, when his example made
A pastime of the toil of tongue and pen;
And now, amid the groves he loved so well
That naught could lure him from their grateful shade,
He sleeps, but wakes elsewhere, for God hath said, Amen!

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PRESIDENT GARFIELD

'E VENNI DAL MARTIRIO A QUESTA PACE.'
Paradiso, XV, 148.

These words the poet heard in Paradise,
Uttered by one who, bravely dying here
In the true faith, was living in that sphere
Where the celestial cross of sacrifice
Spread its protecting arms athwart the skies;
And set thereon, like jewels crystal clear,
The souls magnanimous, that knew not fear,
Flashed their effulgence on his dazzled eyes.
Ah me! how dark the discipline of pain,
Were not the suffering followed by the sense
Of infinite rest and infinite release!
This is our consolation; and again
A great soul cries to us in our suspense,
"I came from martyrdom unto this peace!"

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HOLIDAYS

The holiest of all holidays are those
Kept by ourselves in silence and apart;
The secret anniversaries of the heart,
When the full river of feeling overflows; —
The happy days unclouded to their close;
The sudden joys that out of darkness start
As flames from ashes; swift desires that dart
Like swallows singing down each wind that blows!
White as the gleam of a receding sail,
White as a cloud that floats and fades in air,
White as the whitest lily on a stream,
These tender memories are; — a fairy tale
Of some enchanted land we know not where,
But lovely as a landscape in a dream.

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MEMORIES

Oft I remember those whom I have known
In other days, to whom my heart was led
As by a magnet, and who are not dead,
But absent, and their memories overgrown
With other thoughts and troubles of my own,
As graves with grasses are, and at their head
The stone with moss and lichens so o'erspread,
Nothing is legible but the name alone.
And is it so with them? After long years,
Do they remember me in the same way,
And is the memory pleasant as to me?
I fear to ask; yet wherefore are my fears?
Pleasures, like flowers, may wither and decay,
And yet the root perennial may be.

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THE CROSS OF SNOW

In the long, sleepless watches of the night,
A gentle face — the face of one long dead —
Looks at me from the wall, where round its head
The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.
Here in this room she died; and soul more white
Never through martyrdom of fire was led
To its repose; nor can in books be read
The legend of a life more benedight.
There is a mountain in the distant West
That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines
Displays a cross of snow upon its side.
Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
And seasons, changeless since the day she died.

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II

NATURE

'A SONNET IS A MOMENT'S MONUMENT'

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MOODS

Oh that a Song would sing itself to me
Out of the heart of Nature, or the heart
Of man, the child of Nature, not of Art,
Fresh as the morning, salt as the salt sea,
With just enough of bitterness to be
A medicine to this sluggish mood, and start
The life-blood in my veins, and so impart
Healing and help in this dull lethargy!
Alas! not always doth the breath of song
Breathe on us. It is like the wind that bloweth
At its own will, not ours, nor tarrieth long;
We hear the sound thereof, but no man knoweth
From whence it comes, so sudden and swift and strong,
Nor whither in its wayward course it goeth.

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A SUMMER DAY BY THE SEA

The sun is set; and in his latest beams
Yon little cloud of ashen gray and gold,
Slowly upon the amber air unrolled,
The falling mantle of the Prophet seems.
From the dim headlands many a light-house gleams,
The street-lamps of the ocean; and behold,
O'erhead the banners of the night unfold;
The day hath passed into the land of dreams.
O summer day beside the joyous sea!
O summer day so wonderful and white,
So full of gladness and so full of pain!
Forever and forever shalt thou be
To some the gravestone of a dead delight,
To some the landmark of a new domain.

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THE TIDES

I saw the long line of the vacant shore,
The sea-weed and the shells upon the sand,
And the brown rocks left bare on every hand,
As if the ebbing tide would flow no more.
Then heard I, more distinctly than before,
The ocean breathe and its great breast expand,
And hurrying came on the defenceless land
The insurgent waters with tumultuous roar.
All thought and feeling and desire, I said,
Love, laughter, and the exultant joy of song
Have ebbed from me forever! Suddenly o'er me
They swept again from their deep ocean bed,
And in a tumult of delight, and strong
As youth, and beautiful as youth, upbore me.

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THE SOUND OF THE SEA

THE sea awoke at midnight from its sleep,
And round the pebbly beaches far and wide
I heard the first wave of the rising tide
Rush onward with uninterrupted sweep;
A voice out of the silence of the deep,
A sound mysteriously multiplied
As of a cataract from the mountain's side,
Or roar of winds upon a wooded steep.
So comes to us at times, from the unknown
And inaccessible solitudes of being,
The rushing of the sea-tides of the soul;
And inspirations, that we deem our own,
Are some divine foreshadowing and foreseeing
Of things beyond our reason or control.

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THE GALAXY

Torrent of light and river of the air,
Along whose bed the glimmering stars are seen
Like gold and silver sands in some ravine
Where mountain streams have left their channels bare!
The Spaniard sees in thee the pathway, where
His patron saint descended in the sheen
Of his celestial armor, on serene
And quiet nights, when all the heavens were fair.
Not this I see, nor yet the ancient fable
Of Phaeton's wild course, that scorched the skies
Where'er the hoofs of his hot coursers trod;
But the white drift of worlds o'er chasms of sable,
The star-dust, that is whirled aloft and flies
From the invisible chariot-wheels of God.

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MY CATHEDRAL

Like two cathedral towers these stately pines
Uplift their fretted summits tipped with cones;
The arch beneath them is not built with stones,
Not Art but Nature traced these lovely lines,
And carved this graceful arabesque of vines;
No organ but the wind here sighs and moans,
No sepulchre conceals a martyr's bones,
No marble bishop on his tomb reclines.
Enter! the pavement, carpeted with leaves,
Gives back a softened echo to thy tread!
Listen! the choir is singing; all the birds,
In leafy galleries beneath the eaves,
Are singing! listen, ere the sound be fled,
And learn there may be worship without words.

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AUTUMN

Thou comest, Autumn, heralded by the rain,
With banners, by great gales incessant fanned,
Brighter than brightest silks of Samarcand,
And stately oxen harnessed to thy wain!
Thou standest, like imperial Charlemagne,
Upon thy bridge of gold; thy royal hand
Outstretched with benedictions o'er the land,
Blessing the farms through all thy vast domain!
Thy shield is the red harvest moon, suspended
So long beneath the heaven's o'erhanging eaves;
Thy steps are by the farmer's prayers attended;
Like flames upon an altar shine the sheaves;
And, following thee, in thy ovation splendid,
Thine almoner, the wind, scatters the golden leaves.

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THE HARVEST MOON

It is the Harvest Moon! On gilded vanes
And roofs of villages, on woodland crests
And their aerial neighborhoods of nests
Deserted, on the curtained window-panes
Of rooms where children sleep, on country lanes
And harvest-fields, its mystic splendor rests!
Gone are the birds that were our summer guests;
With the last sheaves return the laboring wains!
All things are symbols: the external shows
Of Nature have their image in the mind,
As flowers and fruits and falling of the leaves;
The song-birds leave us at the summer's close,
Only the empty nests are left behind,
And pipings of the quail among the sheaves.

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ELIOT'S OAK

Thou ancient oak! whose myriad leaves are loud
With sounds of unintelligible speech,
Sounds as of surges on a shingly beach,
Or multitudinous murmurs of a crowd;
With some mysterious gift of tongues endowed,
Thou speakest a different dialect to each;
To me a language that no man can teach,
Of a lost race, long vanished like a cloud.
For underneath thy shade, in days remote,
Seated like Abraham at eventide
Beneath the oaks of Mamre, the unknown
Apostle of the Indians, Eliot, wrote
His Bible in a language that hath died
And is forgotten, save by thee alone.

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VENICE

White swan of cities, slumbering in thy nest
So wonderfully built among the reeds
Of the lagoon, that fences thee and feeds,
As sayeth thy old historian and thy guest!
White water-lily, cradled and caressed
By ocean streams, and from the silt and weeds
Lifting thy golden filaments and seeds,
Thy sun-illumined spires, thy crown and crest!
White phantom city, whose untrodden streets
Are rivers, and whose pavements are the shifting
Shadows of palaces and strips of sky;
I wait to see thee vanish like the fleets
Seen in mirage, or towers of cloud uplifting
In air their unsubstantial masonry.

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GIOTTO'S TOWER

How many lives, made beautiful and sweet
By self-devotion and by self-restraint,
Whose pleasure is to run without complaint
On unknown errands of the Paraclete,
Wanting the reverence of unshodden feet,
Fail of the nimbus which the artists paint
Around the shining forehead of the saint,
And are in their completeness incomplete!
In the old Tuscan town stands Giotto's tower,
The lily of Florence blossoming in stone, —
A vision, a delight, and a desire,—
The builder's perfect and centennial flower,
That in the night of ages bloomed alone,
But wanting still the glory of the spire.

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TO THE RIVER RHONE

Thou Royal River, born of sun and shower
In chambers purple with the Alpine glow,
Wrapped in the spotless ermine of the snow
And rocked by tempests! — at the appointed hour
Forth, like a steel-clad horseman from a tower,
With clang and clink of harness dost thou go
To meet thy vassal torrents, that below
Rush to receive thee and obey thy power.
And now thou movest in triumphal march,
A king among the rivers! On thy way
A hundred towns await and welcome thee;
Bridges uplift for thee the stately arch,
Vineyards encircle thee with garlands gay,
And fleets attend thy progress to the sea!

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BOSTON

St. Botolph's Town! Hither across the plains
And fens of Lincolnshire, in garb austere,
There came a Saxon monk, and founded here
A Priory, pillaged by marauding Danes,
So that thereof no vestige now remains;
Only a name, that, spoken loud and clear,
And echoed in another hemisphere,
Survives the sculptured walls and painted panes.
St. Botolph's Town! Far over leagues of land
And leagues of sea looks forth its noble tower,
And far around the chiming bells are heard;
So may that sacred name forever stand
A landmark, and a symbol of the power
That lies concentred in a single word.

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ST. JOHN'S, CAMBRIDGE

I STAND beneath the tree, whose branches shade
Thy western window, Chapel of St. John!
And hear its leaves repeat their benison
On him, whose hand thy stones memorial laid;
Then I remember one of whom was said
In the world's darkest hour, "Behold thy son!"
And see him living still, and wandering on
And waiting for the advent long delayed.
Not only tongues of the apostles teach
Lessons of love and light, but these expanding
And sheltering boughs with all their leaves implore,
And say in language clear as human speech,
"The peace of God, that passeth understanding,
Be and abide with you forevermore!"

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NIGHT

Into the darkness and the hush of night
Slowly the landscape sinks, and fades away,
And with it fade the phantoms of the day,
The ghosts of men and things, that haunt the light.
The crowd, the clamor, the pursuit, the flight,
The unprofitable splendor and display,
The agitations, and the cares that prey
Upon our hearts, all vanish out of sight.
The better life begins; the world no more
Molests us; all its records we erase
From the dull commonplace book of our lives,
That like a palimpsest is written o'er
With trivial incidents of time and place,
And lo! the ideal, hidden beneath, revives.

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CHIMES

Sweet chimes! that in the loneliness of night
Salute the passing hour, and in the dark
And silent chambers of the household mark
The movements of the myriad orbs of light!
Through my closed eyelids, by the inner sight,
I see the constellations in the arc
Of their great circles moving on, and hark!
I almost hear them singing in their flight.
Better than sleep it is to lie awake,
O'er-canopied by the vast starry dome
Of the immeasurable sky; to feel
The slumbering world sink under us, and make
Hardly an eddy, — a mere rush of foam
On the great sea beneath a sinking keel.

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NATURE

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,
Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
And leave his broken playthings on the floor,
Still gazing at them through the open door,
Nor wholly reassured and comforted
By promises of others in their stead,
Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;
So Nature deals with us, and takes away
Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
Leads us to rest so gently, that we go
Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,
Being too full of sleep to understand
How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

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III

THE LIFE OF LETTERS

'QUICKENED ARE THEY THAT TOUCH THE PROPHET'S BONES'

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DANTE

Tuscan, that wanderest through the realms of gloom,
With thoughtful pace, and sad, majestic eyes,
Stern thoughts and awful from thy soul arise,
Like Farinata from his fiery tomb.
Thy sacred song is like the trump of doom;
Yet in thy heart what human sympathies,
What soft compassion glows, as in the skies
The tender stars their clouded lamps relume!
Methinks I see thee stand with pallid cheeks
By Fra Hilario in his diocese,
As up the convent-walls, in golden streaks,
The ascending sunbeams mark the day's decrease;
And, as he asks what there the stranger seeks,
Thy voice along the cloister whispers "Peace!"

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DIVINA COMMEDIA

I

INFERNO

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

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II

INFERNO

How strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves
Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves
Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves
Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves,
And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!
Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediæval miracle of song!

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III

PURGATORIO

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom
Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!
And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine.
The air is filled with some unknown perfume;
The congregation of the dead make room
For thee to pass; the votive tapers shine;
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna s groves of pine
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb.
From the confessionals I hear arise
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,
And lamentations from the crypts below;
And then a voice celestial that begins
With the pathetic words, "Although your sins
As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."

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IV

PURGATORIO

With snow-white veil and garments as of flame,
  She stands before thee, who so long ago
  Filled thy young heart with passion and the woe
  From which thy song and all its splendors came;
And while with stern rebuke she speaks thy name,
  The ice about thy heart melts as the snow
  On mountain heights, and in swift overflow
  Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.
Thou makest full confession; and a gleam,
  As of the dawn on some dark forest cast,
  Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase;
Lethe and Eunoë — the remembered dream
  And the forgotten sorrow — bring at last
  That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.

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V

PARADISO

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze
With forms of Saints and holy men who died,
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;
And Beatrice again at Dante's side
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;
And the melodious bells among the spires
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven above
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!

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VI

PARADISO

O star of morning and of liberty!
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines
Above the darkness of the Apennines,
Forerunner of the day that is to be!
The voices of the city and the sea,
The voices of the mountains and the pines,
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!
Thy flame is blown abroad from all the heights,
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard,
As of a mighty wind, and men devout,
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,
In their own language hear thy wondrous word,
And many are amazed and many doubt.

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WOODSTOCK PARK

Here in a little rustic hermitage
Alfred the Saxon King, Alfred the Great,
Postponed the cares of king-craft to translate
The Consolations of the Roman sage.
Here Geoffrey Chaucer in his ripe old age
Wrote the unrivalled Tales, which soon or late
The venturous hand that strives to imitate
Vanquished must fall on the unfinished page.
Two kings were they, who ruled by right divine,
And both supreme; one in the realm of Truth,
One in the realm of Fiction and of Song.
What prince hereditary of their line,
Uprising in the strength and flush of youth,
Their glory shall inherit and prolong?

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DEDICATION

TO MICHAEL ANGELO

NOTHING that is shall perish utterly,
But perish only to revive again
In other forms, as clouds restore in rain
The exhalations of the land and sea.
Men build their houses from the masonry
Of ruined tombs; the passion and the pain
Of hearts, that long have ceased to beat, remain
To throb in hearts that are, or are to be.
So from old chronicles, where sleep in dust
Names that once filled the world with trumpet tones,
I build this verse; and flowers of song have thrust
Their roots among the loose disjointed stones,
Which to this end I fashion as I must.
Quickened are they that touch the Prophet's bones.

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CHAUCER

An old man in a lodge within a park;
The chamber walls depicted all around
With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,
Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark
Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;
He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,
Then writeth in a book like any clerk.
He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song; and as I read
I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note
Of lark and linnet, and from every page
Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead.

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SHAKESPEARE

A vision as of crowded city streets,
With human life in endless overflow;
Thunder of thoroughfares; trumpets that blow
To battle; clamor, in obscure retreats,
Of sailors landed from their anchored fleets;
Tolling of bells in turrets, and below
Voices of children, and bright flowers that throw
O'er garden-walls their intermingled sweets!
This vision comes to me when I unfold
The volume of the Poet paramount,
Whom all the Muses loved, not one alone;—
Into his hands they put the lyre of gold,
And, crowned with sacred laurel at their fount,
Placed him as Musagetes on their throne.

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MILTON

I PACE the sounding sea-beach and behold
How the voluminous billows roll and run.
Upheaving and subsiding, while the sun
Shines through their sheeted emerald far unrolled,
And the ninth wave, slow gathering fold by fold
All its loose-flowing garments into one,
Plunges upon the shore, and floods the dun
Pale reach of sands, and changes them to gold.
So in majestic cadence rise and fall
The mighty undulations of thy song,
O sightless bard, England's Mæonides!
And ever and anon, high over all
Uplifted, a ninth wave superb and strong,
Floods all the soul with its melodious seas.

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KEATS

The young Endymion sleeps Endymion's sleep;
The shepherd-boy whose tale was left half told!
The solemn grove uplifts its shield of gold
To the red rising moon, and loud and deep
The nightingale is singing from the steep;
It is midsummer, but the air is cold;
Can it be death? Alas, beside the fold
A shepherd's pipe lies shattered near his sheep.
Lo! in the moonlight gleams a marble white,
On which I read: "Here lieth one whose name
Was writ in water." And was this the meed
Of his sweet singing? Rather let me write:
"The smoking flax before it burst to flame
Was quenched by death, and broken the bruised
reed."

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IN THE CHURCHYARD AT TARRYTOWN

HERE lies the gentle humorist, who died
In the bright Indian Summer of his fame!
A simple stone, with but a date and name,
Marks his secluded resting-place beside
The river that he loved and glorified.
Here in the autumn of his days he came,
But the dry leaves of life were all aflame
With tints that brightened and were multiplied.
How sweet a life was his; how sweet a death!
Living, to wing with mirth the weary hours,
Or with romantic tales the heart to cheer;
Dying, to leave a memory like the breath
Of summers full of sunshine and of showers,
A grief and gladness in the atmosphere.

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THE THREE SILENCES OF MOLINOS

TO JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

THREE Silences there are: the first of speech,
The second of desire, the third of thought;
This is the lore a Spanish monk, distraught
With dreams and visions, was the first to teach.
These Silences, commingling each with each,
Made up the perfect Silence that he sought
And prayed for, and wherein at times he caught
Mysterious sounds from realms beyond our reach.
O thou, whose daily life anticipates
The life to come, and in whose thought and word
The spiritual world preponderates,
Hermit of Amesbury! thou too hast heard
Voices and melodies from beyond the gates,
And speakest only when thy soul is stirred!

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WAPENTAKE

TO ALFRED TENNYSON

Poet! I come to touch thy lance with mine;
Not as a knight, who on the listed field
Of tourney touched his adversary's shield
In token of defiance, but in sign
Of homage to the mastery, which is thine,
In English song; nor will I keep concealed,
And voiceless as a rivulet frost-congealed,
My admiration for thy verse divine.
Not of the howling dervishes of song,
Who craze the brain with their delirious dance,
Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart!
Therefore to thee the laurel-leaves belong,
To thee our love and our allegiance,
For thy allegiance to the poet's art.

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THE BURIAL OF THE POET

RICHARD HENRY DANA

In the old churchyard of his native town,
And in the ancestral tomb beside the wall,
We laid him in the sleep that comes to all,
And left him to his rest and his renown.
The snow was falling, as if Heaven dropped down
White flowers of Paradise to strew his pall; —
The dead around him seemed to wake, and call
His name, as worthy of so white a crown.
And now the moon is shining on the scene,
And the broad sheet of snow is written o'er
With shadows cruciform of leafless trees,
As once the winding-sheet of Saladin
With chapters of the Koran; but, ah! more
Mysterious and triumphant signs are these.

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POSSIBILITIES

WHERE are the Poets, unto whom belong
The Olympian heights; whose singing shafts were sent
Straight to the mark, and not from bows half bent,
But with the utmost tension of the thong?
Where are the stately argosies of song,
Whose rushing keels made music as they went
Sailing in search of some new continent,
With all sail set, and steady winds and strong?
Perhaps there lives some dreamy boy, untaught
In schools, some graduate of the field or street,
Who shall become a master of the art,
An admiral sailing the high seas of thought,
Fearless and first, and steering with his fleet
For lands not yet laid down in any chart.

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ON MRS. KEMBLE'S READINGS FROM SHAKESPEARE

O PRECIOUS evenings! all too swiftly sped!
Leaving us heirs to amplest heritages
Of all the best thoughts of the greatest sages,
And giving tongues unto the silent dead!
How our hearts glowed and trembled as she read,
Interpreting by tones the wondrous pages
Of the great poet who foreruns the ages,
Anticipating all that shall be said!
O happy Reader! having for thy text
The magic book, whose Sibylline leaves have caught
The rarest essence of all human thought!
O happy Poet! by no critic vext!
How must thy listening spirit now rejoice
To be interpreted by such a voice!

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THE BROKEN OAR

Once upon Iceland's solitary strand
A poet wandered with his book and pen,
Seeking some final word, some sweet Amen,
Wherewith to close the volume in his hand.
The billows rolled and plunged upon the sand,
The circling sea-gulls swept beyond his ken,
And from the parting cloud-rack now and then
Flashed the red sunset over sea and land.
Then by the billows at his feet was tossed
A broken oar; and carved thereon he read:
"Oft was I weary, when I toiled at thee;"
And like a man, who findeth what was lost,
He wrote the words, then lifted up his head,
And flung his useless pen into the sea.

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THE FOUR PRINCESSES AT WILNA

A PHOTOGRAPH

Sweet faces, that from pictured casements lean
As from a castle window, looking down
On some gay pageant passing through a town,
Yourselves the fairest figures in the scene;
With what a gentle grace, with what serene
Unconsciousness ye wear the triple crown
Of youth and beauty and the fair renown
Of a great name, that ne'er hath tarnished been!
From your soft eyes, so innocent and sweet,
Four spirits, sweet and innocent as they,
Gaze on the world below, the sky above;
Hark! there is some one singing in the street;
"Faith, Hope, and Love! these three," he
seems to say;
"These three; and greatest of the three is
Love."

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THE DESCENT OF THE MUSES

Nine sisters, beautiful in form and face,
Came from their convent on the shining heights
Of Pierus, the mountain of delights,
To dwell among the people at its base.
Then seemed the world to change. All time and space,
Splendor of cloudless days and starry nights,
And men and manners, and all sounds and sights,
Had a new meaning, a diviner grace.
Proud were these sisters, but were not too proud
To teach in schools of little country towns
Science and song, and all the arts that please;
So that while housewives span, and farmers ploughed,
Their comely daughters, clad in homespun gowns,
Learned the sweet songs of the Pierides.

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THE POETS

O ye dead Poets, who are living still
  Immortal in your verse, though life be fled,
  And ye, O living Poets, who are dead
  Though ye are living, if neglect can kill,
Tell me if in the darkest hours of ill,
  With drops of anguish falling fast and red
  From the sharp crown of thorns upon your head,
  Ye were not glad your errand to fulfil?
Yes; for the gift and ministry of Song
  Have something in them so divinely sweet,
  It can assuage the bitterness of wrong;
Not in the clamor of the crowded street,
  Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
  But in ourselves, are triumph and defeat.

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MY BOOKS

Sadly as some old mediæval knight
Gazed at the arms he could no longer wield,
The sword two-handed and the shining shield
Suspended in the hall, and full in sight,
While secret longings for the lost delight
Of tourney or adventure in the field
Came over him, and tears but half concealed
Trembled and fell upon his beard of white,
So I behold these books upon their shelf,
My ornaments and arms of other days;
Not wholly useless, though no longer used,
For they remind me of my other self,
Younger and stronger, and the pleasant ways
In which I walked, now clouded and confused.

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APPENDIX

EXPERIMENTS AND TRANSLATIONS

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IL PONTE VECCHIO DI FIRENZE

Gaddi mi fece; il Ponte Vecchio sono;
Cinquecent' anni già sull' Arno pianto
Il piede, come il suo Michele Santo
Piantò sul draco. Mentre ch' io ragiono
Lo vedo torcere con flebil suono
Le rilucenti scaglie. Ha questi affranto
Due volte i miei maggior. Me solo intanto
Neppure muove, ed io non l' abbandono.
Io mi rammento quando fur cacciati
I Medici; pur quando Ghibellino
E Guelfo fecer pace mi rammento.
Fiorenza i suoi giojelli m' ha prestati;
E quando penso ch' Agnolo il divino
Su me posava, insuperbir mi sento.

THE OLD BRIDGE AT FLORENCE

Taddeo Gaddi built me. I am old,
Five centuries old. I plant my foot of stone
Upon the Arno, as St. Michael's own
Was planted on the dragon. Fold by fold
Beneath me as it struggles, I behold
Its glistening scales. Twice hath it overthrown
My kindred and companions. Me alone
It moveth not, but is by me controlled.
I can remember when the Medici
Were driven from Florence; longer still ago
The final wars of Ghibelline and Guelf.
Florence adorns me with her jewelry;
And when I think that Michael Angelo
Hath leaned on me, I glory in myself.

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WILL EVER THE DEAR DAYS COME BACK AGAIN?

Will ever the dear days come back again,
Those days of June, when lilacs were in bloom,
And bluebirds sang their sonnets in the gloom
Of leaves that roofed them in from sun or rain?
I know not; but a presence will remain
Forever and forever in this room,
Formless, diffused in air; like a perfume, —
A phantom of the heart, and not the brain.
Delicious days! when every spoken word
Was like a footfall nearer and more near,
And a mysterious knocking at the gate
Of the heart's secret places, and we heard
In the sweet tumult of delight and fear
A voice that whispered, "Open, I cannot wait!"

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

EL BUEN PASTOR BY LOPE DE VEGA

Shepherd! who with thine amorous, sylvan song
Hast broken the slumber that encompassed me,
Who mad'st thy crook from the accursed tree,
On which thy powerful arms were stretched so long!
Lead me to mercy's ever-flowing fountains;
For thou my shepherd, guard, and guide shalt be;
I will obey thy voice, and wait to see
Thy feet all beautiful upon the mountains.
Hear, Shepherd! thou who for thy flock art dying,
Oh, wash away these scarlet sins, for thou
Rejoicest at the contrite sinner's vow.
Oh, wait! to thee my weary soul is crying,
Wait for me! Yet why ask it, when I see,
With feet nailed to the cross, thou 'rt waiting still for me!

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TO-MORROW

MAÑANA BY LOPE DE VEGA

Lord, what am I, that, with unceasing care,
Thou didst seek after me, that thou didst wait,
Wet with unhealthy dews, before my gate,
And pass the gloomy nights of winter there?
Oh, strange delusion, that I did not greet
Thy blest approach! and oh, to Heaven how lost,
If my ingratitude's unkindly frost
Has chilled the bleeding wounds upon thy feet!
How oft my guardian angel gently cried,
"Soul, from thy casement look, and thou shalt see
How he persists to knock and wait for thee!"
And, oh! how often to that voice of sorrow,
"To-morrow we will open," I replied,
And when the morrow came I answered still, "To-morrow."

THE NATIVE LAND

EL PATRIO CIELO BY FRANCISCO DE ALDANA

Clear fount of light! my native land on high,
Bright with a glory that shall never fade!
Mansion of truth! without a veil or shade,
Thy holy quiet meets the spirit's eye.
There dwells the soul in its ethereal essence,
Gasping no longer for life's feeble breath;
But, sentinelled in heaven, its glorious presence
With pitying eye beholds, yet fears not, death.
Beloved country! banished from thy shore,
A stranger in this prison-house of clay,
The exiled spirit weeps and sighs for thee!
Heavenward the bright perfections I adore
Direct, and the sure promise cheers the way,
That, whither love aspires, there shall my dwelling be.

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THE IMAGE OF GOD

LA IMÁGEN DE DIOS BY FRANCISCO DE ALDANA

O Lord! who seest, from yon starry height,
Centred in one the future and the past,
Fashioned in thine own image, see how fast
The world obscures in me what once was bright!
Eternal Sun! the warmth which thou hast given,
To cheer life's flowery April, fast decays;
Yet, in the hoary winter of my days,
Forever green shall be my trust in Heaven.
Celestial King! oh let thy presence pass
Before my spirit, and an image fair
Shall meet that look of mercy from on high,
As the reflected image in a glass
Doth meet the look of him who seeks it there,
And owes its being to the gazer's eye.

THE BROOK

Á UN ARROYUELO ANONYMOUS

Laugh of the mountain! — lyre of bird and tree!
Pomp of the meadow! mirror of the morn!
The soul of April, unto whom are born
The rose and jessamine, leaps wild in thee!
Although, where'er thy devious current strays,
The lap of earth with gold and silver teems,
To me thy clear proceeding brighter seems
Than golden sands, that charm each shepherd's gaze.
How without guile thy bosom, all transparent
As the pure crystal, lets the curious eye
Thy secrets scan, thy smooth, round pebbles count!
How, without malice murmuring, glides thy current!
O sweet simplicity of days gone by!
Thou shun'st the haunts of man, to dwell in limpid fount!

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SEVEN SONNETS AND A CANZONE

BY MICHAEL ANGELO

I. THE ARTIST

NOTHING the greatest artist can conceive
That every marble block doth not confine
Within itself; and only its design
The hand that follows intellect can achieve.
The ill I flee, the good that I believe,
In thee, fair lady, lofty and divine,
Thus hidden lie; and so that death be mine,
Art of desired success doth me bereave.
Love is not guilty, then, nor thy fair face,
Nor fortune, cruelty, nor great disdain,
Of my disgrace, nor chance nor destiny,
If in thy heart both death and love find place
At the same time, and if my humble brain,
Burning, can nothing draw but death from thee.

II. FIRE

NOT without fire can any workman mould
The iron to his preconceived design,
Nor can the artist without fire refine
And purify from all its dross the gold;
Nor can revive the phœnix, we are told,
Except by fire. Hence, if such death be mine,
I hope to rise again with the divine,
Whom death augments, and time cannot make old.
O sweet, sweet death! O fortunate fire that burns
Within me still to renovate my days,
Though I am almost numbered with the dead!
If by its nature unto heaven returns
This element, me, kindled in its blaze,
Will it bear upward when my life is fled.

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III. YOUTH AND AGE

Oh give me back the days when loose and free
To my blind passion were the curb and rein,
Oh give me back the angelic face again,
With which all virtue buried seems to be!
Oh give my panting footsteps back to me,
That are in age so slow and fraught with pain,
And fire and moisture in the heart and brain,
If thou wouldst have me burn and weep for thee!
If it be true thou livest alone, Amor,
On the sweet-bitter tears of human hearts,
In an old man thou canst not wake desire;
Souls that have almost reached the other shore
Of a diviner love should feel the darts,
And be as tinder to a holier fire.

IV. OLD AGE

The course of my long life hath reached at last,
In fragile bark o'er a tempestuous sea,
The common harbor, where must rendered be
Account of all the actions of the past.
The impassioned phantasy, that, vague and vast,
Made art an idol and a king to me,
Was an illusion, and but vanity
Were the desires that lured me and harassed.
The dreams of love, that were so sweet of yore,
What are they now, when two deaths may be mine, —
One sure, and one forecasting its alarms?
Painting and sculpture satisfy no more
The soul now turning to the Love Divine,
That oped, to embrace us, on the cross its arms.

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V. TO VITTORIA COLONNA

LADY, how can it chance — yet this we see
In long experience — that will longer last
A living image carved from quarries vast
Than its own maker, who dies presently?
Cause yieldeth to effect if this so be,
And even Nature is by Art surpassed;
This know I, who to Art have given the past,
But see that Time is breaking faith with me.
Perhaps on both of us long life can I
Either in color or in stone bestow,
By now portraying each in look and mien;
So that a thousand years after we die,
How fair thou wast, and I how full of woe,
And wherefore I so loved thee, may be seen.

VI. TO VITTORIA COLONNA

WHEN the prime mover of my many sighs
Heaven took through death from out her earthly place,
Nature, that never made so fair a face,
Remained ashamed, and tears were in all eyes.
O fate, unheeding my impassioned cries!
O hopes fallacious! O thou spirit of grace,
Where art thou now? Earth holds in its embrace
Thy lovely limbs, thy holy thoughts the skies.
Vainly did cruel death attempt to stay
The rumor of thy virtuous renown,
That Lethe's waters could not wash away!
A thousand leaves, since he hath stricken thee down,
Speak of thee, nor to thee could Heaven convey,
Except through death, a refuge and a crown.

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VII. DANTE

What should be said of him cannot be said;
By too great splendor is his name attended;
To blame is easier those who him offended,
Than reach the faintest glory round him shed.
This man descended to the doomed and dead
For our instruction; then to God ascended;
Heaven opened wide to him its portals splendid,
Who from his country's, closed against him, fled.
Ungrateful land! To its own prejudice
Nurse of his fortunes; and this showeth well
That the most perfect most of grief shall see.
Among a thousand proofs let one suffice,
That as his exile hath no parallel,
Ne'er walked the earth a greater man than he.

VIII. CANZONE

Ah me! ah me! when thinking of the years,
The vanished years, alas, I do not find
Among them all one day that was my own!
Fallacious hopes, desires of the unknown,
Lamenting, loving, burning, and in tears,
(For human passions all have stirred my mind,)
Have held me, now I feel and know, confined
Both from the true and good still far away,
I perish day by day;
The sunshine fails, the shadows grow more dreary,
And I am near to fall, infirm and weary.

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TO ITALY

BY VINCENZO DA FILICAJA

Italy! Italy! thou who'rt doomed to wear
The fatal gift of beauty, and possess
The dower funest of infinite wretchedness
Written upon thy forehead by despair;
Ah! would that thou wert stronger, or less fair,
That they might fear thee more, or love thee less,
Who in the splendor of thy loveliness
Seem wasting, yet to mortal combat dare!
Then from the Alps I should not see descending
Such torrents of armed men, nor Gallic horde
Drinking the wave of Po, distained with gore,
Nor should I see thee girded with a sword
Not thine, and with the stranger's arm contending,
Victor or vanquished, slave forevermore.

THE DISEMBODIED SPIRIT

BY HERNANDO DE HERRERA

Pure Spirit! that within a form of clay
Once veiled the brightness of thy native sky;
In dreamless slumber sealed thy burning eye,
Nor heavenward sought to wing thy flight away!
He that chastised thee did at length unclose
Thy prison doors, and give thee sweet release; —
Unloosed the mortal coil, eternal peace
Received thee to its stillness and repose.
Look down once more from thy celestial dwelling,
Help me to rise and be immortal there, —
An earthly vapor melting into air; —
For my whole soul, with secret ardor swelling,
From earth's dark mansion struggles to be free,
And longs to soar away and be at rest with thee.

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IDEAL BEAUTY

BY HERNANDO DE HERRERA

O LIGHT serene! present in him who breathes
That love divine, which kindles yet restrains
The high-born soul — that in its mortal chains
Heavenward aspires for love's immortal wreaths!
Rich golden locks, within whose clustered curls
Celestial and eternal treasures lie!
A voice that breathes angelic harmony
Among bright coral and unspotted pearls!
What marvellous beauty! Of the high estate
Of immortality, within this light
Transparent veil of flesh, a glimpse is given;
And in the glorious form, I contemplate,
(Although its brightness blinds my feeble sight,)
The immortal still I seek and follow on to Heaven!

THE LOVER'S COMPLAINT

BY HERNANDO DE HERRERA

BRIGHT Sun! that, flaming through the mid-day sky,
Fillest with light heaven's blue, deep-vaulted arch,
Say, hast thou seen in thy celestial march
One hue to rival this blue, tranquil eye?
Thou Summer Wind, of soft and delicate touch,
Fanning me gently with thy cool, fresh pinion,
Say, hast thou found, in all thy wide dominion,
Tresses of gold, that can delight so much?
Moon, honor of the night! Thou glorious choir
Of wandering Planets and eternal Stars!
Say, have ye seen two peerless orbs like these?
Answer me, Sun, Air, Moon, and Stars of fire —
Hear ye my woes, that know no bounds nor bars?
See ye these cruel stars, that brighten and yet freeze?

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ART AND NATURE

BY FRANCISCO DE MEDRANO

The works of human artifice soon tire
The curious eye; the fountain's sparkling rill,
And gardens, when adorned by human skill,
Reproach the feeble hand, the vain desire.
But oh! the free and wild magnificence
Of Nature, in her lavish hours, doth steal,
In admiration silent and intense,
The soul of him who hath a soul to feel.
The river moving on its ceaseless way,
The verdant reach of meadows fair and green,
And the blue hills, that bound the sylvan scene,
These speak of grandeur, that defies decay, —
Proclaim the Eternal Architect on high,
Who stamps on all his works his own eternity.

THE TWO HARVESTS

BY FRANCISCO DE MEDRANO

But yesterday these few and hoary sheaves
Waved in the golden harvest; from the plain
I saw the blade shoot upward, and the grain
Put forth the unripe ear and tender leaves.
Then the glad upland smiled upon the view,
And to the air the broad green leaves unrolled.
A peerless emerald in each silken fold,
And on each palm a pearl of morning dew.
And thus sprang up and ripened in brief space
All that beneath the reaper's sickle died,
All that smiled beauteous in the summer-tide.
And what are we? a copy of that race,
The later harvest of a longer year!
And oh! how many fall before the ripened ear!

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CLEAR HONOR OF THE LIQUID ELEMENT

BY LUIS DE GÓNGORA Y ARGOTE

Clear honor of the liquid element,
Sweet rivulet of shining silver sheen!
Whose waters steal along the meadows green,
With gentle step, and murmur of content!
When she, for whom I bear each fierce extreme,
Beholds herself in thee, — then Love doth trace
The snow and crimson of that lovely face
In the soft gentle movement of thy stream.
Then smoothly flow as now; and set not free
The crystal curb and undulating rein
Which now thy current's headlong speed restrain;
Lest broken and confused the image rest
Of such rare charms on the deep-heaving breast
Of him who holds and sways the trident of the sea.

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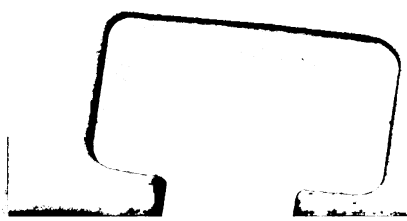
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